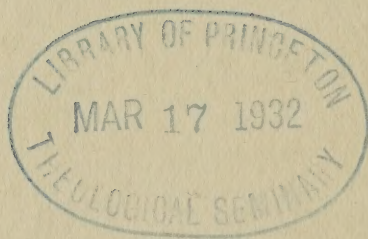


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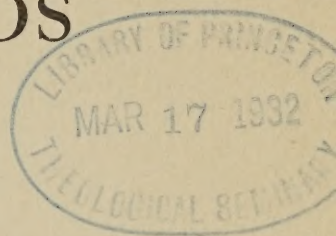
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HIGH ROADS AND CROSS ROADS

HIGH ROADS AND CROSS ROADS



BY
ARCHIBALD CHISHOLM, D.Litt.

AUTHOR OF "LABOUR'S MAGNA CHARTA," "THE HEALING
OF THE NATIONS."

"The best path through life is the high road. Cross-roads may tempt us for one reason or another, but it is very seldom that we do not come to regret having taken them."—*Amiel's Journal*.

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PREFACE

IN these addresses, an endeavour has been made to indicate some of the implications of loyalty to Christ in the ordinary affairs of life. No attempt is made to deal exhaustively with the subjects treated, but certain New Testament passages have been studied because of the guidance they afford on these questions.

A. C.

GLASGOW,

September, 1926.

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CHAPTER I

AT THE CROSS ROADS

WHICH is the best method of recruiting men and women for the Church of Christ ? In Great Britain, as in other lands, there have been periods of revival which have brought new life to the Church and have swept multitudes into the Kingdom as by a powerful wind of God which arose one knew not how. In 1873, Dr. Dale of Birmingham, predicted that there would soon come a time of new life for the Churches, and after a short absence from England he returned to find in operation in Birmingham a movement of which he was at first not a little doubtful. A layman under forty without any university education was attracting great audiences and Dr. Dale who went to form his own impression of the gatherings was soon convinced that the Spirit of God was operating in a peculiar degree under the preaching of Mr. Moody and the singing of Mr. Sankey. "I have seen the sunrise from the top of Helvellyn and the top of the Righi," he wrote "and there is something very glorious in it ; but to see the light of heaven suddenly strike on man after man in the course

of one evening is very much more thrilling. These people carried their new joy with them to their homes and their workshops. It could not be hid." Is this the chief method on which the Church must rely in order to recruit its ranks?

Thirty years before Moody's first visit to this country, Horace Bushnell published his book, "Christian Nurture." He had himself as a student received help in a revival but he found that people were inclined to suggest that unless great movements were taking place the Church was failing and nothing was being done. He believed that generally speaking, the desire for revivals was a sign of the Church's weakness rather than of its strength. If the Church used all the influence in its power and if in its task the parents co-operated, then influences would constantly operate upon the young life which would keep the child in the ways of God so that no revolutionary experience would be required to prepare the youthful life for joyous participation in the salvation of God. Bushnell asserted that the chief method of winning men and women for God and His Church is not through any special times of quickening but through the steady work of the Church, carried on year after year. Revivals had their place chiefly in the lives of those who had not matured spiritually under the operation of the regular means of grace. In the light of these two attitudes of mind, we

examine the story of the Damascus Road, for there is in that epoch-making experience material to guide all who are desirous of knowing how God works in the human soul.

The first truth which was borne in upon the consciousness of Saul as a result of that strange hour on the sun-beaten road, was the truth of the Lordship of Christ. In our day, it is relatively easy to believe that the carpenter of Nazareth is the supreme revelation of God to men, but it was extraordinarily hard in these far-off days. Imagine that by some miracle, Pontius Pilate were raised from the dead and given a place in Westminster Abbey at the Coronation of one of our British kings. He would be amazed at the might of that Empire over which the king was called to reign, so much greater than the little stretch of land over which two thousand years ago he was procurator. He watches intently as the clergymen take their places and eagerly listens to the words associated with the ceremony. He has heard them before, words he could not readily forget, for his spies had brought to him phrases used in Galilee by a peasant whom the people were regarding as the Messiah. A name is mentioned, as the name in which this great king is crowned, the name of the village carpenter whom he tried to save from the cross but whom ultimately he allowed to die. Pilate would be amazed at that which is

now a commonplace of our lives. We can understand how Saul the scholar, even when he listened to messages about Jesus, would dismiss the thought that the Nazarene was the true Messiah. His claims, that all nations would acknowledge him, that only through him could salvation come to Israel, were impossible. Further, his attitude to Scripture was thoroughly unsound. For a learned scribe to expound the teaching of Moses was a task which required reverence and insight, but that an unlearned Galilean should place himself above it, should say, "Ye have heard what Moses said, but I say unto you," was to Saul's mind preposterous. Sometimes he was shaken in mind. Where did Stephen receive the power which enabled him in the hour of his death to witness with such boldness? Was Stephen deceived when he seemed to hold converse with an unseen Lord, when he said that he saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God? Though temporarily shaken, Saul, in order to conceal from himself the doubts which at times frequented his mind, became all the more zealous in his attack and all the more determined in his endeavour to stamp out the heresy. Do not all men become more violent in their assertion of their beliefs when they seem to find them being shaken? The hour came when that proud spirit had to be forced to acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. For one so violent in opposition, so deter-

mined in conflict, no easy measures would suffice and we find him overtaken by an experience which he cannot understand. He is beaten down; on the Damascus Road he sees someone but does not know who it is with whom he holds converse. The Authorized Version wrongly reads, "Who art thou, Lord," as though Saul at once knew that the person who met him on the Damascus Road was Jesus, but this stage has not yet been reached. Unknown, overmastering, awe-inspiring, this visitant appears. "Who art thou, Sir," and the answer comes, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest." Saul had been forced to recognize in the Jesus whom he persecuted a Lord whom he must obey.

This is the stage which many young men and women reach without any violent experiences. Taught from infancy that Jesus stands apart from the ranks of the men whom He was not ashamed to call His brethren, they find it by no means difficult to attribute to Him the title of Lordship He desires and deserves. There are many who cannot recall a time when they doubted the claims of Jesus. At times they may have disregarded them and never have they proved as loyal to them as they might have done, but the passing of the years has brought to them the conviction that the Man of Galilee is the Lord of Life and they may be as firmly convinced of this truth as Paul was after the Damascus journey.

Does not this mean then, that many may go through life and need never have any hour of awakening, or any heart-searching experience? Granted that for men who refuse to acknowledge that Lordship or who having acknowledged it have fallen from the pathway of loyalty, such experiences may be required, does it not seem clear that for the Christian, brought up within a devout home, influenced by the gracious powers of the Christian Church, there should normally be no hour of decision and no epoch-making experience of the soul? This inference is unwarranted.

Let us continue our studies in the experience of Paul. For three days and three nights, blinded and living in a strange home, he neither eats nor drinks. This may possibly have been because his heart was filled with such a strange joy that he was lifted above such mundane considerations. Yet this is not the probable reason. Although Paul does not refer to these days, in all likelihood they were the most trying days of his whole life. Truth had come to him; no longer could he go on persecuting the Christians. His life had been wrong but what was he to do about it? There were various choices. He might have gone back quietly to Jerusalem, explained that for personal reasons he desired to surrender his commission, and living in the house of a relative, he might have settled down to a sedate life, spending part of the time as a

tent-maker and occupying his leisure hours perusing the sacred books of his race. If he heard someone speak disparagingly of the Christians he might utter a word of caution, but no more. This was the easy way and many had chosen it. "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also," we read, "many believed on him but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him." It did not pay to participate actively in the spreading of the new teaching; friends would be alienated; opprobrium would be his lot.

On the other hand there was the way which conscience dictated. If Jesus were Lord the world must know of it and he must play his part in spite of persecution and in spite of loss in the work of spreading that knowledge. This was the nobler way, and after these days of struggle and contest we find him ready to choose it. "Go show him," the voice says to Ananias, "what things he must suffer for my name." He arose and was baptized and from that hour he lived his life in the assured presence of the Lord of all life.

This seems to explain one feature of the great revivals in this land and in other lands. While many have been saved from lives of sin, such gatherings have proved a source of great peace to many who were in the membership of the Christian Church, but who had regarded the claims of Christ in a half-hearted manner. Without

any very thorough examination, they ascribe the beginning of the work of grace to some hour in a revival meeting when with many others they came forward and pledged publicly their loyalty to Christ, but this hour was not necessarily the beginning of their true discipleship. If death had claimed them before such an hour, I am sure that the Master would have reckoned many of them among His own, but what really happened was that while other sinful men were passing from darkness into light they were for the first time in their lives publicly professing Christ. The truths which before they had acknowledged implicitly they were now acknowledging openly, and because they were conscious that they were holding back nothing that their Lord demanded of them, they found a new joy and a new hope. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall I confess before my father which is in heaven." They proclaimed their faith to the world and in so doing they found themselves supported in the desire they cherished to lead a truly Christian life. Word went round the workshop or the place of business that they had made the confession and eagle eyes were upon them; they were often scoffed at but this all helped to keep them in the narrow way.

They did not require a revival meeting to give them this opportunity of confessing Christ. For

one thing the act of joining the membership of the Church when reverently entered upon provides the faithful with the opportunity of confession, but many in all our churches have joined the full membership, without serious thought. Yet there are many loyal hearts and true who when they took this momentous step took it with a full sense of the implications involved. Christ was raising his armies to follow Him to the conquest of the world and they were eager to join the ranks and to bear if need be the reproach of discipleship. They had discovered a Leader Whom they rejoiced to serve.

“ I have a captain, and the heart
Of every private man
Has drunk in valour from his eyes,
Since first the war began.
He is most merciful in fight
And of his scars a single sight
The embers of our failing might
Into a flame can fan.”

Do some of us feel that while we acknowledge our Lord in a general way, there is not in our lives any of the true over-mastering joy which is sometimes associated with discipleship? For those who are not yet members, let them with full understanding of what it means, come forward, nailing their colours to the mast. For others, let there be some definite service undertaken, some new alle-

giance declared, some new pathway explored, and in this new service there will come the joy of those who are "not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

CHAPTER II

THE KING'S HIGH ROAD

IF a man robs another should he be ashamed of himself? There were to be found in St. Paul's time, philosophers who would at once answer in the negative. Aristippus, a student of Socrates, had founded the school of the Cyrenaics, and these able philosophers discovered an excuse for many actions which we regard as unworthy. "If a man robs another," it was freely asserted, "he should only be anxious if he is found out. We have to spend but a short time in this world and the hours should be filled with as much pleasure as possible, irrespective of how others are affected." How different from this insidious teaching is the stern morality of Paul. He finds himself a creature of impulses which unless controlled will lead him astray and he compares himself to a boxer fighting his own instincts.

The school of the Cyrenaics will always have its successors, for so long as men are determined to live unto the flesh they will find philosophers ready to justify their action. In countless novels this gospel is proclaimed, and a few experts engage in research to justify this new form of an old philosophy.

There are outstanding opponents of modern psychology who would disown altogether this low view of life, but there are others who under the guise of new psychology are preaching a gospel of death. Man is endowed with certain instincts which control him at different stages of his life, and these instincts, if refused expression, lead to disorder both physical and mental. To repress these instincts is to set oneself against the natural course of one's human development, and is therefore fatal. When this creed is popularized, we find it taking the form of an attitude to life which justifies many breaches of moral codes and pours contempt on those specifically Christian virtues which the Church rightly honours. This point of view, for the advocacy of which there is no dearth of preachers, is the greatest enemy we have to face to-day. Our generation passed through a time of testing when many delights had to be scorned and in the inevitable period of reaction, the message has found greater popularity than it would otherwise have done. It is always pleasant to be able to justify one's misdeeds by philosophical arguments. Against this prevailing point of view, we have the stern, though enlightened, morality of the gospels, commanding men to throw aside the life devoted to pleasure-seeking and to search for higher things.

The new cult of irresponsible pleasure-seeking will not last for ever. It will work its way through

society like a disease, will manifest to heart-broken, deceived followers how dissatisfying it is and will leave them calling out for something better. We may argue as we may against it and our arguments may be like so many wooden guns aimed at a citadel, but the stern disillusionment to which the votaries of the life of pleasure will be subjected one day will be the best argument. Meantime we must establish our own faith in the nobler way and we desire to discover what is our ground for certainty that ultimately the Christian way will conquer.

Our first ground for hope is to be found in the nature of the human heart. In the days of spring, we witness the power of nature to re-create itself. Branches which remained through the long winter without signs of life suddenly begin to show their leaves. The bulbs which have been lying in the soil forgotten for months become active and penetrate to the surface that they may disclose their hidden glory. It is a process which cannot be stayed by man even if he would wish it, for it is in the very nature of things that this new life should spring forth. Let a seed find its way into a sandy cleft in a great rock where it takes root. The rock with all its heavy weight may have remained unmoved for decades, but life has come and this seed will struggle for life and we shall probably find the rock parted rather than the seed fail to come to fruition. The coming of spring is the great miracle of nature

and the inevitable green comes upon the fields and life into the trees because the powers of nature must express themselves. How are we to describe the human heart? Are the myriads of people who inhabit the surface of the earth to be regarded as gardens in which many weeds have found a root but where only an occasional seed of good wheat has been sown, no care being taken whether it lives or dies? Or are they gardens in which an equal amount of tares and of wheat has been allowed to find root; or are they, on the other hand, specially prepared gardens in which with the care and watchfulness of a skilled gardener some of the choicest of the wheat has been planted, though tares are not absent. The last view is the Christian view. Although so far as our bodily structure is concerned, we are of the earth earthly, there is implanted in everyone a divine seed, meantime so frail that it requires a human body in which to express itself. One day it will pass on to its fuller life, equipped not as at present, but with a body more akin to its spiritual nature. If we thought that a careless gardener had been at work scattering a few good seeds here and there, or if we believed that the life of a man had only an earthly origin, and that no spiritual life were possible until some hour when of his good will the master-gardener cared to sow a seed, then we should be doubtful of the soul's future, but there can be no doubt

of the possibilities hidden away in any human heart.

As sure as in the seemingly dead branches of the tree there is hidden the power which is going to produce the buds, as certainly in all our lives has God's spirit taken its abode and the life work of man is to afford that divine seed power to grow up. Yet unlike the power of spring which breaks down all resistance, the divine seed is not so imperious in its insistence on self-expression. Otherwise we should all be saints, for, whether we encouraged it or not, we would find the spiritual nature expressing itself to all men. The true adventure of life is to be discovered in man's attitude towards the divine possibilities inherent in his nature.

We are intent that in the hearts of men noble motives should rule and we start with this conviction, that it is man's nature that he should love the highest and follow the ideal. We are not like men trying to beat an almost dead horse to make it go in a way it is unwilling to take, but we are rather like huntsmen, keeping the swift hounds back with strong thongs, for they are struggling to escape from our hands and to run after the quarry. This is the faith the Christian cherishes regarding his own heart and the heart of other men. His true nature seeks the best ; the life is in the seed and it must struggle to exert itself. Like a captive hound it is eager to get free. When added to this

power within, there is that divine power from without mediated through Christ, we find human personalities progressing in the way of salvation.

What makes it difficult for us to believe this, is the fact that by so many influences we have chained the spirit of man. Sinful practices have begun to operate and low ideals to have their place until as we look out on our fellow-men or into our own hearts, we are at first apt to imagine that what is dominant is the pursuit of what is low. In order that the divine life may express itself, we must of set purpose strive to destroy those other things which are destroying our spiritual nature. The life of the seed, the power of spring, are almost invincible, but the spirit of man is such a sensitive thing that if we allow what is unworthy to gain possession, we may cover over the divine within us to such an extent that it can find no expression. Let the farmer neglect his field for a year or two and no matter how much good seed may be placed therein, the weeds will grow apace, eating up all that would otherwise nourish the good seed and there will be no crop. So if we allow our unworthy passions to be fed, and if we devote our energies to the following of what is ignoble, there is no sustenance provided for the good seed. Hence, in order that a man may express the noblest instinct of all, the instinct of the soul for God, it is necessary to allow to remain unexpressed these primitive

urges which would otherwise destroy his deeper nature. Accustomed as we are to the refining influences of a civilization which has removed from the average man the terrible intensity of some primitive instincts, the struggle against dark passions may not be so terrible as that familiar to the men of the East who felt that nothing but crucifixion of the flesh would satisfy and who "resisted unto blood" struggling against sin. We find an illustration of this bitter conflict for righteousness in the works of the negro poet, Countee Cullen :

" All day long and all night through,
One thing only I must do.
Quench my pride and cool my blood,
Lest I perish in the flood.
Lest a hidden ember set
Timber that I thought was wet
Burning like the driest flax,
Melting like the merest wax.
Nor yet has my heart or head
In the least way realized,
They and I are civilized."

The Christian does not deny himself because he regards the world as evil, but he imposes restraints on himself because he knows that only by sacrificing the development of some instincts can he allow the most wonderful thing in his nature to come to fruition, that divine seed which is implanted in him

and which constitutes his truest life—this power of God within him which is working unto salvation.

There are many ways of defining this central word of New Testament teaching. "The end of your faith," we read, "is the salvation of your souls." Nothing is so important as that. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul," if he fill his life with all the worldling's joys, if he drink of every fountain and satisfy every desire and find at the end that there is within him nothing which can endure and which can go to find itself at home for ever in the fellowship which God promises to his own.

Salvation is the most wonderful experience in the world and in some ways the most disappointing for the soul which is in pursuit of God and which has appropriated some knowledge of the divine will, is ever seeking new heights to attain. It is both a possession and a pursuit. It is a possession. The Christian finds himself freed from those many fears which beset others. He can face life's difficulties knowing that while misfortune may affect him outwardly, it cannot penetrate to that deeper life which is hidden with God. His sins which are many are left behind him for the divine forgiveness covers all. Death is robbed of his sting for it does not affect that imperishable nature within him except to usher it into its fullest and noblest life.

While a possession, it is also a pursuit, and the most saintly are always saying, "Not that I have already attained, but I press on that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." No matter how nobly the Christian may live, there are always greater heights of character to reach, fresh virtues to acquire and nobler attainments to which he can aspire. Every eminence attained, instead of being a summit from which the Christian can look with pride upon the road over which he has travelled, becomes a fresh starting point from which he sets out to climb another ascent hitherto covered by the mists. So he goes on, and the final stage of all is reached when that body which was the agent by which his soul transacted with the world is left behind as dust to dust, and the soul freed from its limitations, retaining all the glorious depth and riches of a developed personality, goes on to its fuller life with God. Salvation, while experienced in this life, is known in its fullest and noblest, only when this life is over.

"The power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth." What place has faith to play in all this process? First of all, we are not to imagine that faith is the power which produces this salvation. Faith does not create salvation but is the means by which salvation enters and is sustained in our lives. A man is not saved on account of his faith but through his faith. It is

not because he can stand before God and manifest any quality that he calls faith that God provides him with the corresponding gift of salvation, but faith is the agent by which we appropriate to ourselves those gifts which divine love is eagerly seeking to pour out upon the human soul. So when we read the great words, "We are saved by faith," we are not to imagine that our faith is the creator of the way of salvation and that everything depends on the strength of our faith. This would be but a feeble rock on which to build the edifice. The lamp of faith sometimes burns very low in the heart of a good man. Our salvation depends on something deeper and stronger, that eternal life which made the universe and which has implanted something of its own nature in every human heart. It is of God, but faith is the means by which man places himself in fellowship with God. "The power of God unto salvation unto everyone that believeth." When we choose the way of Jesus, a power enters our lives which will bring to fruition the noblest tendencies of our nature and bring our souls into the way of salvation.



CHAPTER III

WEALTH

"OUR queen reigns over the greatest nation that ever existed," Egremont says in Disraeli's novel "Sybil." "Which of the nations," the young stranger asks, "for she reigns over two . . . two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy, who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings as if they were dwellers in different zones, inhabitants of different planets." Mr. John Strachey has recalled this portrayal of social life a generation ago, and while many factors are operating to heal the breach, there are still two great nations in our land, the rich and the poor.

In times of prosperity we are not so conscious of the hostility, but when periods of bad trade come, employers and employees are affected and when they find that they are not securing from industry the returns they desire, they become suspicious of each other, the one imagining that the other is receiving too much of the product which both are engaged in acquiring. Suppose two men entered into partnership and decided that while they would sell the goods they made during ten months of the

year, they would still work as hard as ever for the remaining two months, but at the end of that time they would burn in a huge bonfire all they had produced. These men would probably both remain poor, but they would not likely blame each other for their poverty. This is precisely what our country is doing. Employers and employees use their gifts in order to produce the necessities of life, but as in a bonfire, they destroy almost one quarter of the results of their annual activities. Sir Josiah Stamp, after careful investigation, says that the nations of Europe expend annually on armaments about eight per cent. of the national dividend, or the equivalent of at least a month's work every year of all the producers and plant of these nations. In order to avoid exaggeration, let us place the amount thus expended at two weeks' work. This is not the only means of wasteful expenditure. The expenditure on gambling in its various forms devours more than the expenditure of armaments, so we find ourselves working as a nation for at least another three weeks, but using the income thus secured for betting, while we dissipate the result of other four weeks' work on alcohol. Thus we find the two great partners in industry working hard all the year round, throwing upon a bonfire the result of more than two months' work and afterwards standing looking angrily at each other because they are not richer.

The expenditure on gambling in its various forms is considerably greater than the expenditure on armaments. Much of this money is of course a transfer from the loser to the winner and many make profits, but these profits and losses are not taken into account when business men or workmen estimate their financial position, so that from the point of view of industrial unrest, we are concerned only with the amount expended. Part of the expenditure on armaments will always be necessary, for disarmament does not mean depriving a nation of all its fighting resources, but leaving the nation only with sufficient resources in military equipment to preserve order within. Part of the expenditure on alcohol goes to taxation, but no lasting solution of our industrial problems can be found, and there can be no cure for the poverty which exists until there has been a considerable reduction of our outlay on these three items. Someone has declared that the motto of a good many Christians is to make money according to the laws of Political Economy and to spend it according to the laws of Christianity. While a very imperfect principle, if men and women did spend the money they make in the most beneficial ways, our real social problems of destitution and distress would be solved.

The problem of the method of making our money is equally important, and here men must be left very largely to the guidance of conscience. There

is a powerful tendency to-day to attribute the weakness of our social life to the fact that we have departed from the ideal of the Mediæval Church. That Church, many tell us, held before Europe a great ideal and endeavoured to enforce that ideal. "Each for all and all for God"; impelled by that motive, matters would have developed towards that far-off divine event for which all creation was making had there not occurred the mistake of the Reformation. The fateful shadow of Luther, we are told, fell on a civilization which was beginning to show some indications of the approach of the Eternal City, and the fine principles of the Mediæval Church were forgotten. It would be unkind to lift the veil from the weaknesses and frailties of the Mediæval Church, to show that in spite of the fine utterances of preachers and writers, grave corruption existed. The teaching of the reformers was in no sense different in its ideals from the teaching of the great thinkers who preceded them. Any who are in doubt of this need only consult the unbiased statement of Mr. Tawney, in "Religion and Capitalism," even as to discover the weakness of the Mediæval Church, they need only read Dr. Coulton's "Mediæval Village." No preacher was more earnest than Luther in denouncing the heresy that a man's religion could be separated from his daily conduct. Living among peasants, he left unsolved some of the questions with which

Calvin had to deal, but while on such matters as usury Calvin gave teaching more in line with the new economic developments of his time than the Church Fathers had done, and while Calvin was eager to give details as to conduct while Luther was satisfied to apply principles, the social ideals of the reformers were in no wise less exalted than the ideals of their predecessors. What is wrong and has always been wrong, is that the Church always lives below its ideals and that human nature never practises adequately what it professes.

When Nehemiah in his zeal for God left the comfort of his exalted position in the court of the king of Babylon, he returned to his own country and found that although the temple had been rebuilt for thirty years, there were few indications in the life of the people that the ideals associated with the temple had secured any firm hold. To-day no one questions the right of any individual organization which lends money to receive a fair rate of interest. The person who borrows it is probably using his money to increase his wealth, while the person who lends it might use it profitably if he did not lend it. There are still groups of money-lenders whose activities are a menace to our social life. The money-lending Jews who were expelled from London in the thirteenth century because they demanded twopence per week per pound—43½ per cent. per annum—had some excuse. They were

prohibited from entering the ordinary spheres of business and they had to make money somehow. The person who to-day crushes the unfortunate people who through necessity must seek his help is entirely inexcusable. In Nehemiah's time, life was simple. Wealth which had been accrued could only be stored in a man's coffers, and if his money was restored to him without interest he suffered no loss. Further, the only reason which induced men to borrow was poverty. There had been a dearth and the peasants had not the wherewithal to buy seed to sow for the next harvest, and they had gone to the wealthy Jews and had received money, but had been charged an excessive rate, and when they did not return the amount due their lands were taken from them, or if they had no lands to dispose of, they or their families were sold into servitude. How could the work of rebuilding the city be undertaken with zeal when such injustices remained and when so many were in such distress? "Some of our daughters are brought into bondage already," they told Nehemiah, "neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and our vineyards." A convocation of the nobles was held and when the real nature of their actions was brought to their notice, they agreed to restore the houses and the vineyards they had taken and to refrain from lending money at usury. The strongest plea urged

upon them was the effect of their unbrotherly action on the enemies without. "Ought ye not to walk in the fear of God because of the reproach of the heathen, our enemies?"

To-day life is much more complex than in the time of the building of the temple, but there is the same need for the application of moral principles to business life. Calvin tried to reform Geneva by laying down laws on every possible subject and those who broke his laws were brought before his tribunal. During the four years 1542-46, fifty-eight persons were executed and seventy-six banished for various offences. If a dealer provided short measure of coal, or a surgeon asked an excessive fee for an operation; if a landlord raised rents owing to scarcity of houses, or a lender charged an undue rate of interest, then these actions were reported to the Church and the offender was denied the Sacraments. Should he persist in his action, he might in the end be denied the rights of Christian burial. The whole community found itself living in a house of glass, subject to accusation of the self-appointed police into which every church member, desirous of so doing, transformed himself. Modern life is too complex and the situation too difficult to be dealt with along these lines and the Church as a Church has absolutely no detailed social policy to lay down, but the duty of the Church is to amend the thought of its people, to create such a

high standard of life among its members, that the world will be won for the nobler ways of the Church. "Holiness," says Pusey, "is doing common things in an uncommon way." To-day what we must insist on, is that we set an example to the world by the charity we show to each other, by the rectitude we manifest in our daily life, by our willingness to subordinate what is material to that which is spiritual. Judgment must begin at the house of God, and realizing that as Christians we are called to live our lives on a nobler plane than those who do not acknowledge Jesus as Saviour and Lord, we must maintain before the world the nobler ideal and remove the reproaches so often raised against the Church by those who are without.

A Church which is represented in the business world by men and women who live by noble standards and manifest in their dealings the principles of brotherliness and unselfishness, cannot fail to win the world. It was said of Newman that even while he remained outside the Church of Rome, he acted like a church bell which while itself remaining without, induces others to enter. Unfortunately there are some whose life cannot stand the test which the world rightly applies to Christian men and women, and while they are within the Church they are really ringing others out and keeping others from being attracted. The greatest contribution to the winning of men and women for Christ and

His Kingdom is made by those whose hearts are full of love for Christ and who order their lives in such a way that the world is eager to discover their secret, and finding that they draw their resources from the message of Christ, come eagerly to join the ranks of those who have learned the Master's way.

The incident of the washing of the disciples' feet is an illustration of the way of Christ. The disciples were wearied with the exacting duties of the day. Had there been no dispute about pre-eminence these twelve men would have been found pleasantly competing with one another for the privilege of washing the Master's feet, but a spirit of jealousy has been created. All know that the ceremony has to be performed ; the basin and the towel are resting there. Night by night before they sit down to a meal the dust of the day is thus removed, but who is going to do it ? Not those brothers who have been asking the chief places. Not Peter who has overheard the request of their mother. To do so would be to sell the pass, to acknowledge that the others had the right to pre-eminence, but as they tarry, suddenly that gracious form is seen bending at their feet. Naturally, because it was His nature so to do ; lovingly, because He knew that this jealous mood was but a passing phase in the experience of men whose hearts beat true, He did what they would not do, and

these hands of His handled the common towel. To such a life, forgetful of self, ready to respond to the call for service wherever sounded and whatever form it takes, Jesus summons our generation, and to such a life He calls us each one. Some have heard it and have given their lives in loyal and willing allegiance to the Master who calls for their service, and others have heard it and refused, and so long as they continue their refusal, their life will be overcast and their sky clouded.

CHAPTER IV

SPORT

WHEN the Christian Church originated, there was a great craze for sport all over the Roman Empire. The gymnasium by the riverside at Tarsus was filled with competitors and Jerusalem itself was affected. At considerable cost, Herod had caused a gymnasium to be erected and his action was opposed by the Jews, not because they had any real antipathy to innocent sport, but because associated with the gymnasium there were practices which tended to divert youth from allegiance to Jehovah and to direct them into sinful courses.

Some forms of modern sport which are indulged in for the pleasure they afford were once a social necessity. There was a time when huntsmen had to gather together to kill the wild animals which frequented our forests and caves, even as to-day such action is at times necessary in France and elsewhere. Once a breed of wild animals has been exterminated in our island we are immune from their ravages, but in France from time to time inroads are made into peaceful territory by

animals which cause great devastation. The wolves, one following another, like Indians on the war track, make their occasional invasions, and about 7,000 wolves and bears are annually brought down in that country.

Other forms of sport have their origin in religious practices or in customs associated with the seasons. In Scotland, a game very like football, was for centuries played on Shrove Tuesday, but it was always known which side would win. One side represented winter and had of necessity to be overcome by the side representing spring, either as an indication that spring had conquered the cold of winter, or to help in the process of bringing in the less inclement weather. Tug-of-war was played by men, often placed on two sides of a stream, and those on the east side had always to win for somehow the game was associated with the bringing forth of the gentle west winds to play upon the land.

Whatever their origin, our modern sports are fulfilling a very necessary function in the life of our nation. Thereby, tired bodies and minds are refreshed ; men are trained in endurance, in forgetfulness of self and in loyalty to the group. Unfortunately, like most good things, sport has been subject to great abuses, and while in countless cases it is an agent for the building up of strong character, in others it is simply an agent whereby

the desire to make money without effort or toil is pursued, generally with little success.

The Select Committee on the Betting Tax declares that "there is justification for the view held by some that betting is ingrained in the Anglo-Saxon race and that if prohibited in one direction it will break out in another." This statement by itself omits an important factor. In many cases the desire for betting arises because men find their lives monotonous and because their opportunities of self-expression are limited. The enduring cure for betting is not to be found in suppression, but in doing all that can be done to widen men's interests, to restore to the life of the ordinary man the zest and interest which we believe a full acceptance of the Christian way of life can provide. It may be true that the betting instinct, if refused one method of expression will find another, but primarily it is not a betting instinct. It is something nobler, the desire for a life of interest and adventure, and there is no necessity why it should ever express itself in the form of betting.

Yet here is the great enemy of true sport. In a certain school in one of the poorer neighbourhoods in London, children of ten to twelve years of age were found purchasing racing tips and placing bets of from 3d. to 6d. on their favourite horse. It is not to be wondered at that betting among women is on the increase when we discover that

in some areas organized bands of bookmakers' assistants regularly visit working-class homes between ten and eleven in the morning persuading the women to spend in this degrading manner the money they can so ill afford. Betting is immoral and anti-social. Even in its most innocent form such as the sweepstake, it is a breach not only of the higher teachings of Christian morality, but of the elementary precepts surely implanted in the heart of every right-thinking man. All who are resolutely striving to free sport from this desolating practice are making a valuable contribution to social well-being.

When our consciences are clear in this respect, we have not solved all the questions which arise. What place should be given to sport? For some people, sport has become a passion, absorbing every spare moment, leaving their minds exhausted and their bodies unfitted for the regular pursuit of their occupation. The word "pastime" by derivation envisages a state of affairs which should not be common—a man with idle hands, not knowing what to do in his spare hours, eager for some means of passing time. While unfortunately the lives of many are so void of interests that it is good that they should have some harmless way of spending their spare time, there are relatively few cases in which the greater part of one's spare time should be dedicated to sport. We are responsible for the recreation not only of our bodies but of our minds,

and apart from the need for giving time on Sunday to the recreation of our deeper being, we should find time if possible on other days as well for opportunities of unselfish work for the betterment of our fellow-men. Our pastimes have fulfilled their function when they have refreshed our mind and body and made us better equipped for the real work we have to do, for there are other things in life than the frame of the athlete or the vigour of the sportsman.

“Bodily exercise,” says Timothy’s correspondent, “is of some profit, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of that life which now is and of that which is to come.” In these words we have a description of the end of life, the manifestation of that godliness which makes our present life glorious and which has a promise of that life which is to come.

The writer of the epistle to Timothy urged his followers to keep to the rules of the game. “If a man strive for masteries, he is not crowned except he strive lawfully.” It was possible for a man to find himself ahead of his fellow-competitors, to expect to win the prize but to find it awarded to another because he had broken the laws of the game. Paul had this fear. His metaphor is one in which he unites the idea of the herald and of the competitor. It was the task of someone specially set apart as a herald to tell those competing the

exact rules, and the phrase, "having preached to others," is based on the Greek word referring to the duties of the herald. How strange it would be for a man who was regarded as knowing the rules of the game so well that he was set apart to teach others, to compete in a race and find himself disqualified because of some breach of the rules. "Lest having heralded to others I should find myself disqualified." There are rules for the game of life and we know them well. If a man is to find the joy of the Lord his strength and to compete for that incorruptible crown, he must be willing to submit to that gentle discipline imposed on him by the Master Who calls him to follow in His steps.

If in our life there is to be that fellowship with God without which life must be imperfect, then we must keep from our lives all these things which destroy fellowship with the unseen and must assiduously strive to keep ourselves in the love of God. The many rules of the game we know; the need for waiting on God in His sanctuary, the call to cultivate the life of prayer, the readiness to allow the purifying work of God's spirit to take place in our heart, purging us until like gold tried in the furnace, we are ready for the Master's service.

Paul compares the prizes awarded in athletic contests with the rewards of the Christian race. The Greek or Roman athlete competed that he might be crowned with a chaplet of fallen leaves.

"This they do," says Paul, "to obtain a corruptible crown. We struggle for a crown that is incorruptible." For the Christian who bravely runs the appointed race, there is a prize at the end, one which the Righteous Judge will give at that great day, but there is also a prize as he runs. The life which is lived for noble purpose, which finds time for unselfish service of those who live under greyer skies than we do, is one in which there is found a joy which cannot come through the search for self-advancement. To many who grasp with both hands the prizes which the world counts dear, it is inconceivable that there should be anything more valuable than wealth and position. To the man who is running the Christian race there comes an understanding of the glorious possibilities of life and he finds himself daily enriched by spiritual gifts to which the most precious thing the world affords is but tinsel. If a man lives without bringing his life into loyal obedience to the will of Christ, then he is missing the one thing which redeems life from futility.

Last of all, Paul urges the necessity of knowing the goal for which we are making. He uses in one place the metaphor of a boxing match. There is the skilled boxer who knows exactly where to plant his blows and there is the man who, either through lack of skill or through lack of control, hits aimlessly, striking no one. "So fight I," says Paul,

“not as one that beateth the air ; I therefore so run, not as uncertainly.” It is impossible to conceive a man on the racecourse not knowing what he has to make for ; he knows the winning line. To reach it is his one aim and object, but in human life a great number of people run without knowing where they are running.

What should be our aim in life ? Is it to live long ? By care we may increase the number of years we live in the world, but there are limits to this. Karl Pearson declares that one half to three-fourths of deaths are determined at birth by inheritance factors. Let us with him in his “Chances of Death,” watch humanity coming over the Bridge of Life. The bridge is under heavy fire and the weapons of death remain in their places, aiming at certain parts of the bridge all the time. There approach the bridge a great number of the new lives ushered into the world and they are at first exposed to the swift and deadly fire of the machine guns at that part of the bridge called infancy, and many fall. After this testing part has been passed we see the survivors march over the section called youth, and here only arrows are being aimed and many of them miss the mark. There is the next stage of maturity and a blunderbuss is being discharged constantly on this part and many fall, and then the last stage of all is reached and the swift marksman is at work with his sharp-shooter.

Some may escape it for a time, but none escape it for ever, and ere the end of the bridge is reached, all have fallen under the fatal attacks.

Man did not come into the world simply for the sake of spending as long as possible on the Bridge of Life, but during the crossing he has been finding a true purpose and whether the arrows lay him low in youth or whether he survives to fall a victim to the sharp-shooter who attacks the last spans of the bridge, he can achieve something independent of time. "Godliness is profitable unto all things." The Christian has discovered life's eternal nature and has found in the midst of transient things the secret of fellowship with God. This is the aim and end of life, and it is in proportion to its ability to contribute to this supreme end that we must estimate our amusements and find place for our pastimes.

CHAPTER V

BOOKS

THE reading of a large number of people is regulated by the demands of their profession. In many respects they are a favoured section, for in the pursuit of their daily vocation, they are compelled to rethink the thoughts of great men and their minds are thereby enlarged. Not that such a vocation is one of which a man never tires ; the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes had time to apply his heart, " to know and to search and to seek out wisdom and the reason of things," and embarrassed by the number of books to which he had access and wearied often by his mental labours, he declared that, " of the making of books there is no end and much study is a weariness to the flesh."

The average person has too little time to reach the stage of weariness through which the preacher passed. There are many who can find little time for more than a perusal of the newspapers. Our great daily newspapers, in addition to providing us with news of the world's happenings, provide the reader with a very broad and not illiberal education, and if, in addition, this reading is supplemented by a

perusal of some of the better magazines, a man may find himself quite well educated and adequately informed without much reading of books. Yet none of us should be satisfied with this provision for the needs of our mind, for the proper improvement of our minds requires as much care as the true development of our bodies.

“ If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not ; if morning skies,
Books and my food and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain ;
Lord Thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake.”

If, in the words of Robert Louis Stevenson, the great books knock at the door of our minds in vain, we are living a circumscribed life without access to that noble realm of literature from which none of us should be excluded.

Our needs differ. Some intensely active minds find their recreation as John Morley and Woodrow Wilson did in detective stories ; others find much refreshment of mind in some novel while others escape from the routine of life by going out with some adventurer along unknown tracks. We cannot afford to be critical of the reading in which others indulge. So long as the book is uplifting, it may perform a useful function. British publishers issued more books last year than in any previous year, and while, of course, a notable increase was

found in the number of novels produced, there was quite a satisfactory increase of books on Biography, Religion, Poetry and Travel. Of the 12,706 books issued, many must have brought recreation and stimulus to thousands of wearied minds, not a few of whom would say with Thomas à Kempis, "Everywhere I have sought peace and found it nowhere, but in a corner with a book."

Many of our best-sellers have a very brief history. They sell by the thousands for one month or a year and are then almost forgotten. There are other books which have an enduring sale, but no best-seller can equal in its record of sales a collection of books now in its three hundred and fifteenth year of circulation, the Authorized Version of the Scriptures.

The necessity for careful study of this book has been emphasized so regularly by Protestant preachers that it is worth while directing attention to a recent counsel given by the Roman Catholic Cardinal O'Donnel, which was read throughout the whole diocese of Armagh, on Sunday, February 14th, 1926. "The Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles should be constantly in the hands of the faithful, daily turned over and carefully read and in that way become sap and blood for them. Let the father of the family who holds his authority from God use it in all gentleness, but with firm determination that the Gospel of Christ will be the book that is best known in the family circle among

those who are growing up." Our desire is to see that great library of noble books enthroned in our national life as never before.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Bible was in great disfavour in France. To quote it or to acknowledge that one read it meant that one would have been regarded as altogether behind the times. A group of men had gathered in Paris, and among them was one of the very greatest scholars of his age, Benjamin Franklin. In addition to his fame as an editor and as a diplomat, he had won such distinction in science that all countries were showering honours upon him. A number of eminent people were gathered together; literature was being discussed, and some of the most outstanding illustrations of the poet's art and of the dramatist's powers were being considered, and at the instigation of Franklin, a dramatist rose and recited a somewhat lengthy piece of work with which his hearers were utterly unfamiliar, and as the beauty and power of the narrative began to impress them, they were eager to learn the authorship of this powerful writing. The dramatist had recited the story of Ruth, an extract from that Sacred Book which the wise men of Paris were despising. On account of its deep knowledge of the human heart, this narrative from a far-off day at once asserted its powers over these scholars.

If we take the wonderful library which is printed

within the covers of the Bible we find there, from the point of view of literature, a collection which cannot be equalled, and the nature of the collection is such that it is impossible to discover from other literature any writings which deserve to be placed alongside them. In the "Salvaging of Civilization," Mr. H. G. Wells truly pointed out that the various parts of the Bible are of unequal value so far as their appeal to heart and conscience is concerned, and suggested that many parts, including long lists of names, might be left out of a new compilation which should include the great part of the Bible together with some of the noblest literature of our own and other races. When he tried to find writings which deserved to be bound alongside extracts from the Scriptures, he found it impossible to declare with certainty that any particular piece should be added. He hazards the suggestion that such a poem as Henley's would be suitable :

" In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

" It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate :
I am the captain of my soul."

Few will agree with this suggestion. No matter what additions we may suggest, we shall find our-

selves faced with the fact that within the pages of our New Testament there are contained the greatest writings the world has known and that they stand by themselves.

The New Testament writers had not before them a complete Bible as we have it to-day. Consequently they do not give us any definite guidance as to what books ought to be included in the Bible, but the Christian Church, led by the Spirit, early came to conclusions generally accepted by later ages. In 2 Timothy we are reminded of the use of inspired scripture. "All scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." We all recognize the desirability of attaining the ideal indicated in those verses, a life perfect, not only physically developed, but thoroughly furnished and equipped for the whole work of life. Legitimate sport aids development along one line; wise reading stores the mind and equips man with that intellectual vigour and breadth of outlook so necessary if he is to help his generation. Regarded from the proper point of view, the Bible is the greatest guide, not to scientific knowledge, but to a true view of the nature of the universe.

There are two ways of describing anything. The strictly scientific person tells us that the grass-

hopper produces his chirping sound by rubbing his wings together. Abraham Cowley, on the other hand, prepares an ode to the grasshopper :—

“ Happy insect, what can be
In happiness compared to thee ?
Fed with nourishment divine,
The dewy morning’s gentle wine.”

After thus addressing it, he tells of its song :—

“ The shepherd gladly heareth thee,
More harmonious than he.
Thee country hinds with gladness hear
Prophet of the ripen’d year.”

The scientific explanation and the poet’s interpretation are both required. We require not only the scientist to tell us accurately the nature of the structure of the universe, but also the inspired writer who does not trouble with the details of scientific discovery, but provides us with a spiritual interpretation of the nature of life, who shows us God walking upon the waters, forming the whole world out of chaos. Men have at times been mistaken enough to imagine that the value of certain parts of the Old Testament stood or fell by the degree to which they corresponded with the exact discoveries of modern science, whereas the Old Testament is giving us what the scientist does not try to give, a view of life and of creation in relation to the Divine Creator. Because we require

to have this deeper insight, and because while other books may be inspired inasmuch as they lift our thoughts to higher issues, the Bible contains a double portion of God's spirit, it must ever form part of the study of the man who is to be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Telling us in our sin of Divine forgiveness, whispering in the hour when friends are parted from us of the great reunion, reminding us when the sky is overcast of an unfailing Love eternal as the heavens, challenging us in our weariness to go out to live a life well-pleasing to God, it must for ever occupy a unique place in the minds of thoughtful men.

Humanity longs for some sure word of God, and when Jesus lived on earth the disciples knew where with certainty they could discover the will of God. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." During these amazing years, men knew where they might learn the divine will, and to-day when we see Christ no more after the flesh, we are able to discover for ourselves the Word of God in a very real fashion. The attitude of the Reformers has been enshrined in the teaching of the Church. Martin Luther declared that the Word of God was to the Scripture as the soul is to the body. He pointed out that when we use the words "The Scripture is the Word of God," we must mean by the word "is" not logical identity, but the idea of "containing," "recording" or "conveying." "The Word of

God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments "our Church declares "is the supreme standard of faith and doctrine." It takes two people to make a revelation and so the culminating revelation of divine truth was granted only after centuries of preparation and this divine library provides us with all stages of that divine revelation. In some parts we have the truth of God shining through much that is dark like the sun at dawn breaking through the clouds of night. We read on and we find the light continuing to break through, shining more and more until the perfect day when the Son of God appeared and the world rejoiced. "He was the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Because man must know his destiny, must be supported by some sure word of prophecy, the heart of man will for ever turn with earnestness to that imperishable Word which is contained in the Scriptures we so deservedly honour.

The results of modern scholarship may have changed the attitude of thoughtful men on many questions relating to the nature of the inspiration of scripture, but they have in no wise detracted from the right of the Bible to be regarded as a Book apart. Professor Gwatkin reminds us that in a wrestling match an athlete sometimes surrenders one hold of his antagonist because he sees that thereby he may secure a better hold, and so, if we give up some of our conceptions regarding Scripture,

it is not with a view to surrendering our attachment to that noble book. We are eager to secure a firmer hold that our generation may grapple the Bible to its heart with cords of steel.

This is the claim we make, that therein we can hear the voice of God as nowhere else and that in its pages men can discover the divine will in its fulness. Yet, if we are to find in the Scriptures all that we are meant to discover, we must go with prepared mind. It is not enough to accept this book on the authority of the Church or on the statements of believing men. It is vital that individually we should discover in its pages the accents of God in such a way that we would be sure of its inspiration though every man in the world and every Church in Christendom disowned it except ourselves. The Bible, by its timeless appeal to the noblest in all men, is the most powerful agent for turning men to loyalty to Jesus, but on the other hand, the deepening of our religious life and the increase of loyalty to the message of Jesus is the most important factor on which we can rely in the endeavour to secure for the Bible its place in the thought of the world. Only those who turn to the pages of sacred writ with a desire to find some living word from the lips of a Master whom they love and wholeheartedly serve, will enter into the full meaning of the Book of Books.

CHAPTER VI

CHURCH AND SACRAMENTS

THERE are no parts of Thomas à Kempis's soul-searching book which are more penetrating than the section which deals with the Lord's Supper. We find there a conversation between the soul and Christ. The Voice of the Disciple is heard in thanksgiving, in petition, in confession of folly :—

“ So inconsiderate in speech, so unbridled to silence ;
So uncomposed in manners : so fretful in action ;
So eager about food, so deaf to the word of God.”

The Voice of the Beloved is heard telling of the significance of the hour of fellowship with God at His Table.

“ Of my own will did I offer up myself unto God the Father for thy sins, my hands being stretched forth on the Cross and my body laid bare, so that nothing remained in me that was not wholly turned into a sacrifice for the appeasing of the divine Majesty.

“ In like manner also oughtest thou also to offer thyself willingly unto me every day in the Holy Communion, as a pure and sacred oblation, with all

thy strength and affections and to the utmost reach of thy inward faculties."

Whether we approach the Lord's Table frequently or whether as in many Churches we communicate only on a few sacred occasions in the course of the year, we realize that then the Master speaks to the conscience of His Church as at no other time. There are many words used to describe this sacrament but the phrase Holy Communion, which Thomas à Kempis seemed to favour, is one which contains several implications which we do well to ponder. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

The gathering of Christian men and women together according to our Lord's appointment reminds us of the challenge which this sacrament presents to a world in which mistrust and suspicion seem to abound. The Christian cannot satisfy his own soul with the messages of comfort and forgiveness associated with this ordinance without recalling the Master's vision of a world completely won for His service. The great need of our day is communion, fellowship between man and man and between nation and nation. Although it is only occasionally that we find our industrial life menaced by some great industrial dispute, nevertheless there are always to be heard the rumblings of distrust which often die away for a time but which occasionally increase in volume until we

find the community divided into warring camps. During the last thirty-two years in Great Britain, there have been many industrial conflicts and the time lost has been equal to one day's labour per annum of every man and woman employed in our country's industry: This may not seem much but the resulting bitterness and the hostility which is engendered make any effective endeavour for the common good well-nigh impossible.

In international affairs, there is the same division of interests. America invents a gas like Lewisite, so powerful that if three drops of it settle on the skin death results. The nations continue the mad struggle to keep pace with one another; Great Britain in order to match the increasing aerial forces of France, has made plans to increase her military air force to eighteen times what it was in 1922. Why? All because the ideal of communion does not operate, and because men have not been led captive by the vision of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by the prophets, and inaugurated by Jesus.

If this great conception is to be realized, it must begin somewhere and the early Church believed that the salvation of the world waited on the spread of the Church until it would embrace within its fellowship all the peoples of the earth. As the first believers lived together, caring not for worldly position and ready to sacrifice their personal

possessions, they felt that they were setting an example to the world of the nature of the Kingdom which Jesus endeavoured to establish. The Church should ever stand before men as a community characterized by gracious sympathy with the weak, in which class distinctions and racial differences are forgotten and where all are brothers because they acknowledge their loyalty to the great Elder Brother.

Too many belittle the nature of the contribution which has been made along these lines ; the Church which sends its bravest and best to the far-off places of the field to proclaim the message of life, which inspires millions of people to lives of self-sacrifice and which provides for many fellowship and sympathy in need, in so far as it is realizing these ends, is carrying out the aims for which it was instituted. No group of men is more self-sacrificing than those who profess allegiance to the Christian Church and no section of the community does more unselfish redemptive work than that section which acknowledges Christ as Lord, but at its very best the Church has a great distance to travel before it can honestly present itself to a disunited world and say, " Within our ranks we have found the true secret of effective fellowship. The cure of your disorders will be found when the world becomes one communion as the Church is." The day is yet far distant when the Master's prayer will be answered.

“ That they all may be one ; as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” This is the appointed manner in which the world is to find the way of peace.

International organizations for world peace are essential and when brought under the sway of the Christian message they will perform their work effectively, but the sovereign way of bringing peace to the world is through growth in fellowship and in the spirit of love within the Church itself. As we gather round the Lord's Table, ratifying afresh the vows made for us in Baptism, and also making profession of a personal faith, we proclaim our unity in Christ. No father who loves his child will be envious if in the course of the years his son attains a greater eminence than he himself has attained. A brother rejoices in his brother's progress and does all he can to make the way to further advance easy. Where true love is, then envy is forgotten. When one within the family circle falls on evil days, or drags an honoured name in the dust, the true mother does not disown the wayward son but labours for his return to the paths of righteousness. Too often Christian men and women manifest a pettiness of outlook and a jealousy of spirit, and a concern for their own rights and privileges which make church life sometimes as full of bitterness as is the life of the world

without. Still, we are finding the secret and in increasing measure we are realizing our brotherhood, and while much remains yet to be done, there are to be found within the organized church opportunities of unselfish service of such a nature that men and women who are eager to make the most worthy contribution to the world's well-being, should place their gifts of character and intellect at her service.

If the solution of our modern difficulties is to be found in the revivifying of the Church, in like measure the rebirth of the Church depends on the degree to which the individual comes to realize the communion with Christ of which Paul speaks. In the fifty-first psalm we have the experience of one who was at once a great sinner and a great saint. The nature of his sin we cannot well judge, for though there is an intensity of feeling in this psalm which makes any treatment of it as a national psalm seem difficult, the nature of the penitent man's transgression is not declared. It has left his body weak and frail ; he speaks of " the bones which thou hast broken." It has robbed him of all joy in life and he fears that it may be strong enough to deprive him of any fellowship he had with God. " Take not thy Holy Spirit from me, restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." Doubtless if he had given fuller detail we would have found that he had brought sorrow to others through his transgression, but

while not unmindful of the feelings of others the ever-present thought is that in his unrighteousness he has sinned against God. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight."

To-day when a man forgets himself he naturally and rightly strives to make reparation to those he has injured, and tends to forget that no matter how gravely he may have offended his friends, there is One of purer heart than to behold iniquity whom he has offended still more deeply. John Masefield portrays this sense of higher accountability in his description of Saul Kane's remorse. Every act of self-indulgence, the reckless man is told, is :—

" One more flint upon His way,
Another thorn upon His head ;
Another mock by where He tread,
Another nail, another Cross,
All that you are is that Christ's loss."

If we have injured our fellow-man knowingly and if with power to repair the injury we sit at the Lord's Table complacently doing nothing, then we are surely among those who discern not the Lord's Body. " In the name and authority of the eternal God and His Son Jesus Christ," the Book of Common Order reads, " I warn from this Table all such as live a life directly fighting against the will of God, charging them, as they will answer in the presence of Him Who is the righteous Judge that they

presume not to profane this most Holy Table. And yet this I pronounce not to exclude any penitent person, how grievous soever his sins have been, so that he feel in his heart unfeigned repentance for the same : but only such as continue in sin without repentance." Surely there are few who in the hour of Communion do not become duly penitent as they remember their failure and disloyalty to the bonds of brotherhood, but many forget to treat their sins in the true light, as a wrong done to the Master of the Feast, who longs that they should be reconciled to Him, but who in spite of His infinite love can admit them to full fellowship only when by His Grace they have turned their backs upon their unworthy desire.

The sense of reverent awe in the presence of God has points of comparison with other emotions, but is nevertheless essentially unique. Dr. Otto in "The Idea of the Holy" emphasizes this. He points out that when we have discovered such attributes of God as Reason, Purpose, Goodwill, we have by no means succeeded in penetrating the inner secret of the Godhead. God is "The Holy One," and by this we do not mean simply that He manifests a higher standard of goodness than man can achieve. To indicate the truth that there is in God that which is not exhausted by any of His attributes Dr. Otto uses a new word, "the numinous," and he shows how when man is

in effective communication with the deeper life of God, there is a correspondingly unique attitude of mind which is described as "the creature consciousness." While some of the elements of this attitude may be indicated—the profound sense of awe denoted by *mysterium tremendum*, or of overpoweringness associated with the word *majestas*—yet the experience cannot be described in terms of any of its components. Religion introduces us to a secret experience which is otherwise unknown.

Communion with Christ is the end we seek to secure as we partake of the Sacrament, but it is also in one sense a condition of partaking. We are entering into relations with One in Whom there was no sin, Who though tempted as we are, fought against its power in His day of strong crying and tears, and unless we are prepared to give up all that is out of harmony with His purpose, we cannot share his fellowship. At the door of our hearts there lies a great mass of selfishness, of unworthy desire, of ignoble ambition which we have power to clear away but instead we ask Him too often if He will walk over the debris and He enters no human heart on these terms.

In the home of our spirit there are many rooms in which we have erected altars to pride, to self-seeking, to evil impulse and we ask Him to enter offering Him the keys of many rooms, but eager still to have access at times to one or more of these

altars. Though He longs to enter, He cannot on these terms. If on the other hand without reserve we seek to discover what is His will for us, and if we offer to Him the obedience of heart and soul and mind, then we shall find that the cloud which hinders fellowship is removed, and He will enter Whose right it is to reign. Not only so but we shall find ourselves lifted above our selves, raised to that nobler life which He promises, exalted to that communion which faithful men in all ages have enjoyed.

“ I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body I cannot tell : or whether out of the body, I cannot tell : God knoweth) : such an one caught up to the third heaven.

“ And I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell : God knoweth).

“ How that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

“ Of such an one will I glory.”

CHAPTER VII

FAILURE

IN 1925, there was published in *The American Mercury*, a poem which received great attention. The writer was a young man barely twenty-two years of age, the son of a coloured Methodist minister at Haarlem, and in the poem, "The Shroud of Colour," some of the aspirations and emotions of the coloured races are powerfully expressed. It was natural that a book of poems by this youthful writer, Countee Cullen, should be eagerly awaited, and one of the many thoughtful pieces in his book, entitled "Color," tells the story of Simon the Cyrenian. He is described as a member of the dark races, coming to visit Jerusalem, and marked out from the men who gather round Jesus because of his darkened hue. Simon at first resents the request of Jesus that he should bear His cross, but afterwards he willingly agrees, conquered by the love he saw in the suffering eyes of the prisoner being led to His crucifixion.

" At first I said I will not bear
His cross upon my back ;
He only seeks to place it there,
Because my skin is black.

" But He was dying for a dream,
And He was very meek.
And in His eyes there shone a gleam
Men journey far to seek.

" It was Himself my pity bought,
I did for Christ alone,
What all of Rome could not have wrought
With bruise of lash or stone."

One of the factors which made the last hours of Jesus so terrible was that He was forsaken almost of all ; that He Who had lightened the burdens of so many of His own people was constrained to ask an unknown visitor from a foreign land to carry the cross on which He was to be impaled.

How different the story might have been ! It is true that if the morale of the disciples had not been broken, if they had endured the last hours with courageous faith, looking forward intently to the fulfilment of the Resurrection promise, then we might have found critics continuing to allege that the Resurrection was simply the materialization of hopes which had never been forgotten by the disciples who were eagerly awaiting the hour when the first strange experience would lead them to assert that the Lord of Life had not been overcome of death. Yet the pious imagination may well think of what the story might have been if the faith of these disciples had not failed. The quiet of the garden is disturbed by the stealthy sound of

footsteps and the flashing of torches on all sides. Soon the Roman soldiers appear, and they find eleven strong men, the light of faith in their eyes, gathered together round their Lord. Not a blow, not an undignified word, for the truth has been borne in upon them that the hour of the Master's darkest trial has come and that He would not have it otherwise. As the soldiers march through the empty streets of Jerusalem, there walk with them, probably unbound, for the soldiers had no commandment to seize the disciples, these friends of Jesus who are determined to support Him by their presence and by their prayers to the very end. Although the gate of the Chief Priest's palace would doubtless have been closed upon them, they would have waited in the early morning hours, and as the Master was being taken to the Sanhedrin, their silent presence would have strengthened Him, or with the help of the beloved disciple, all the eleven might have been allowed into the palace yard and the men watching by the fire, instead of hearing one man utter strange oaths, would have been impressed by eleven men bravely declaring their faith in the Master Whom they followed. Then when the final journey had to be made, there would have been no need to invoke the services of the stranger from Cyrene, but there would have been rivalry to be given the privilege of carrying the Master's Cross. So although the

sun might still have withheld its light in the hour when three figures were hanging on a green hill, the cause of Christ would have suffered no dishonour. Faithful unto the end, they would have been honoured in all generations for their courage during those last hours of tragedy. It was not to be.

The actual story was so different. Startled out of sleep, their nerves shattered by the sudden spectacle of soldiers gathering around them, they lost their courage. There was a rash blow, a hurried flight, Peter's threefold denial and scoffing. The judge, hearing how badly the twelve have treated their Lord, asked Him in scoffing tones concerning His disciples. Just as Jesus had warned them, when the shepherd was smitten the sheep were scattered. Looking back on their behaviour on that momentous night, the disciples must have been humbled to the dust, horrified at their cowardice, appalled to think they had been capable of such unworthy conduct. Then only did they realize how wise their Master's words had been, "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation."

The business world has no place for the man who cannot be relied upon. There are men who are capable of rising to great heights, and who on occasion can easily outstrip their companions, but because their efforts are spasmodic and because they do not possess the steady and disciplined character which ensues continuous effort, they find

themselves passed over in favour of others with less ability but who manifest that steady level of satisfactory achievement which is so necessary. The business world deals hardly with the man who makes one mistake. In social life, though we do not adopt quite as harsh measures, yet when a man has shown that his word is not as good as his bond, he soon finds how unrelenting the judgment of society can be. Our whole life is based on the assumption that men will perform what they promise to perform. Reliability is requisite everywhere, or rather almost everywhere, for we seem to be very willing to pardon those who fail in connection with the deepest loyalties of all, the loyalties of our Christian faith.

We can, it is true, be too stern in our treatment of each other's faults. At Pamphylia, Paul and Barnabas with the youthful Mark, were constrained to go into the difficult regions beyond, but for some reason which we cannot discern, Mark refused to go. Much more youthful than the others, not so thoroughly schooled in the dangers of the disciple life, Mark's courage must have failed him. Paul and Barnabas went alone, but the hour of Mark's recovery came, when ashamed of what he had done, the youthful disciple showed a willingness to endure whatever hardships were necessary for the sake of the gospel. Paul had too good a memory. The man who had failed him once would never get

a chance to fail him a second time, and in spite of the pleading of Barnabas, he would not allow Mark to go, so Paul and Barnabas separated, Paul and Silas going in one direction, Barnabas and Mark in another. The years passed and the failure of Mark was forgotten, for towards the end of Paul's life, we find Mark frequently appearing as the trusted friend of the apostle. But probably in his action, Paul was showing a spirit too frequently discovered among those who name the name of Jesus, the spirit which is too ready to mark each misdeed, too unwilling to pardon and to overlook when genuine repentance is apparent.

While we should not judge one another, is it not true that the great body of Christian people are too lenient with themselves, when they judge the degree to which they implement the promises they have made to their Saviour? Mr. Montaigne in his stirring novel, "Rough Justice," tells the story of a group of men from Oxford and Cambridge who found themselves in a company of recruits in the opening days of the world war. Because years before he had done a little soldiering, one of the others, a man with no education and whose occupation had been a very lowly one, was placed in charge, and the men knew how weak their corporal was and his badly given commands were carelessly carried out. The section espied the sergeant-major coming over the training-ground to the place where

they were drilling and they knew that the weakness of their well-meaning corporal would be soon found out and that there would be no promotion for him but rather degradation of position, so one of the men passed the word along that they should not fail their leader while the sergeant-major was at hand. In a moment the morale of the section changed. With minds alert, determined to do their very best, they went through their drill as they had never done before until the sergeant-major passed on, well satisfied that the corporal was suitable for promotion. What kind of display does the Church make before the world? The commands come clear and definite; the Captain is one whom all respect; His knowledge of the right action is unequalled; yet a laggard band, with heavy foot, disobedient to the word of command, with little thought that they hold His honour in their hands, go stumbling and faltering week by week, dishonouring that noble name by which they are called. It is apparent everywhere. Here is a church member, who frequently finds himself joining with the people of God in the house of prayer, but men find they have to watch him every inch of the way in his business dealings and not a few find that by his subtlety he has misled them. Here is another who acknowledges Jesus as Lord, but who is merciless in his treatment of others, showing no sympathy for the weak, and ruthlessly intent on augmenting

his steadily growing store of wealth. The story of the hours in the garden is repeated time after time, and while most of us look on and bravely protest that never under any circumstances shall we find ourselves so obviously traitorous to our Lord, the Master quietly looks into our eyes and says, "Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation."

What is the meaning of these words? The disciples by the light of the moon pass into the wood staying near the main road, Peter, James and John going further within. Why should they watch and pray? Is it that in these last hours Jesus is eager to be given some time to fight His battle in communion with His Father in heaven, to receive from God insight into the full meaning of what is to befall Him and strength to bear it? His was a conflict in which no stranger dared intrude and so He withdrew Himself even from the chosen three. It was desirable that the spying emissaries of the priests should not come upon Him without warning. This probably explains in part the words of Jesus. His enemies were approaching and He desired time for undisturbed fellowship with God, and when the soldiers came He was to be given warning of their approach. There were other reasons. In the agonizing strife he longed for the company of those men who, in spite of their frailties, were his dearest and best friends. The animal receives a mortal wound, or finds death claiming

it and steals to its lonely lair to die alone, but man in his last hour is comforted by the presence of faithful ones who by their prayers and companionship support the soul ere it takes its flight. Could ye not watch with Me one hour? Could ye not in prayer support Me, in love surround Me?

While these reasons may not have been absent from His mind, the chief reason was for their own sakes. Trials greater than they could envisage were to befall them; the bridegroom was to be removed; their Leader was to fall into the hands of evil men, and then bereft of His counsel, they would be tested as never before, and in order that they might pass through their fiery furnace unscathed, they must remain on the alert. We know how sadly they failed. They did not realize how momentous the hour was; they had never before found their Master overcome by His enemies. When the people desired to throw Him from the pinnacle of the temple, He passed through their midst unnoticed. A few months before, soldiers had come to arrest Him but found themselves helpless in the presence of His divine dignity and the disciples must have felt that in some strange way the Master would again evade anything to His hurt. They had not learned that for a purpose they could not understand, the hour had come when Jesus would use none of His divine powers, the Hour of the Prince of Darkness, and so they fell

asleep and the slumber of these early morning hours explains the cowardly escape, the rash action of a man only half awake who smote off a soldier's ear and the persistent denial of the disciple who was so certain that he would never fail His Lord. If we are to be found faithful in the midst of the many temptations which beset us, it can only be by keeping our spirits constantly responsive to the voice of God.

CHAPTER VIII

A NEW BEGINNING

IN a house in Jerusalem a heart-broken mother rises from her restless slumber to face a new day and to remember afresh a recent sorrow. Two days before she had stood in the midst of a band of rude Roman soldiers while on the Cross her Son was suffering :—

“Numbered with the malefactors,
Torn with nails and crowned with thorns.”

Now she finds herself in the comfortable home which she is sharing with the beloved disciple, but the sympathy of those who surround her cannot console her deep grief. “A sword shall pierce thy heart,” she had been told many years before, but she did not think that the sword could pierce so deeply or wound so sorely.

Not far distant, there is another home, probably much more humble, in which a conscience-stricken fisherman awakes to face the memory of a shameful hour which he feels will haunt him all his life.

His fellow-disciples have proved themselves cowards but he has been infinitely worse than they. In spite of his proud boast of loyalty, he had stood in the midst of the enemies of his Lord, had denied that he was a disciple and had supported his denials by shameful oaths which only a fisherman at his very worst moments could use. There is a hurried knocking at the door. With breathless haste Mary Magdalene enters, startling him with the news which she hurries on to repeat to the mother of Jesus and to the beloved disciple. "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre and we know not where they have laid Him." In a few hours the mystery was solved. Jesus had conquered death; Mary's sorrow was changed into joy and Peter's despair into hope, although he could not drive from his mind the recollection of his hour of tragic failure.

What was his future to be? In the dark hours after the crucifixion this question did not arise. There had come an end to the great adventure for their Leader had fallen a victim and there seemed nothing for the disciples to do but to return to their several homes, remaining silent when their friends told them that they had laboured for naught and had devoted themselves to a hopeless cause. Nothing would ever persuade them that it had not been good for them to spend the months in close fellowship with Jesus, but after all they seemed

to have followed a will of the-wisp. The fact of the Resurrection presents a new situation to Peter. Forgotten words come to his mind, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," and the disciple believes that the Master Who has overcome the grave will some day see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. A new epoch is opening out before the men who had followed Him, a period of hardship but of glorious opportunity and with his whole heart Peter wishes he had been more worthy to take his place in the work of the coming days. He is willing to serve as never before, to sacrifice, to suffer if need be, but perhaps the Master does not want to be further associated with a man who has proved so unworthy. These doubts are silenced when a message is brought to him by the women. "Go, tell the disciples, and Peter, I go before you into Galilee." There is no longer hesitation. His denial has been forgiven and with humble joy he takes his place with the others in these momentous hours in the upper room and elsewhere when the Master appears in His risen glory.

There are some moods in which men feel that nothing is worth while and that they long to flee from life. Dr. McCurdy, in "The Psychology of Emotion," publishes a remarkable poem which one of his patients composed in sleep :—

“ Immortal One,
Gentlest among the gods,
Stretch forth thy dusky wings
That under their vast shadows we may lie
Who desire sleep, the weary who would die
And know no more of life, no more of pain.
Immortal One,
Gentlest among the gods,
Grant us the boon we crave ; of life surcease,
And in the shadow of Thy great wings, peace.”

Unfortunately, many people are brought to despair because of experiences which ought not to enter so deeply into their spirits as they do. A great many people make the mistake of having only one interest in life. There is for example the man who lives only for business. He naturally receives the respect of his friends for the way in which he applies himself to his own absorbing interest. When affairs prosper, his cup is full, but when the day of adversity comes, he is left struggling in the quicksands. This is the mistake too many make ; even if the man who works hard and faithfully in business were guaranteed a career of steady success without any periods of failure, such a life would be unsatisfying, but with all the uncertainties of modern business life, the man who lives for his business only, who has no outside interests to share his attention, is making his happiness depend on something which is very uncertain. Do we recognize fully what a man receives as a result of throwing himself actively into

some branch of church work? What he does for others is of course an important consideration, but what he receives is as vital. His interests are widened; he has claims which distract his attention and drive from his mind even for a few hours the adverse conditions of business life, and because he has not based all his happiness on the pursuit of business, he is able to stand with brave heart in the day of adversity until the clouds go past.

To have only one interest and to live for that generally proves disastrous, unless the dominating interest is one which by its very nature is capable of springing forth into new life when it seems to have died, and here Peter was fortunate, for his one and only passion was associated with that which possessed within itself powers of recovery. A man may find himself the victim of misfortune in business and may be too old to start again, but the man who proves himself a failure in the religious life can start afresh, whenever he turns his face to the Saviour who first called him into His service. God never gives up hope of a man in whom there remains a love for Christ and though he prove unworthy, and though he fail miserably, there is always a divine love which will take the erring one and set him on his feet again and call him once more to loyal service. So Peter found, and so the erring followers of the Master have found all through the ages. They may not start as though they had

never denied their Lord ; they may find that as a result of their sin they have been excluded from opportunities of service which were once theirs, but with the Lord is infinite forgiveness and Peter found how great that forgiveness was.

George Herbert tells the story of the coming into being of the early Church :—

“ There was a Prince of old
At Salem dwelt, who lived with good increase
Of flock and fold.
He sweetly lived ; yet sweetness did not save
His life from death.
But after death, out of his grave,
There sprang twelve stalks of wheat.”

After their hour of weakness, the disciples determined to live for the message of the Resurrection which brought them new joy, but they were leaderless men. The Master Whom they always followed had gone and no one stood out conspicuously among the others as a natural leader. There was a time when all eyes would have turned to Peter. Did the disciples not remember the hour of the Great Confession when the Master, discovering one disciple who had learned the great secret, said, “ Thou art Peter ; on this rock I shall build my Church.” The words did not by any means involve the others in subordination to the reckless Apostle, but they seemed to mark him out for priority among the disciples. Without doubt the others who

would willingly have granted this, had it not been for his denial. Again, was there not that hour when the Master, foreseeing the faithlessness of them all, had said to Peter, "When thou art converted, when you repent of your denial and turn once more to Me, strengthen thy brethren." Whether the others would have been willing to forget Peter's past and to give him a place as leader we cannot tell, but Peter would not have accepted it until some experience came which made him sure that it was the Lord's will that he should assume the position he seemed to have forfeited. Many days passed, and Peter continued to take his place with the others, until one momentous day came when Peter discovered that it was his Master's good pleasure not only that he should have his place in the disciple band, but that he should contribute his gifts of initiative and leadership and assume the place which he thought he had forfeited.

Although the disciples had left all to follow Jesus, we are not to imagine that they never went back to the seafaring life. Theirs was a prosperous calling; the fish they caught was salted and sold, not only in the neighbourhood but over a wide area, and in all likelihood, at intervals, some of the disciples may have added to their financial resources by a night on the sea. One day a tax-gatherer came to ask Peter for the tribute money, but the disciple had not at hand the wherewithal to pay,

and Jesus told him that he would find a piece of money in the mouth of a fish. How did Peter fulfil this injunction? Not probably by taking a hook and catching a fish, whose mouth when opened contained a coin, but by setting out for a night's fishing until he secured a catch which would have paid the tribute money several times over.

Once more, not because they have given up hope in Christ, but because they are not very sure of what they ought to be doing, they go a-fishing, and we know the story of the fruitless night, of the miraculous draught, of Peter's hurried rush through the waters to meet his Lord and of the quiet meal by the side of the sea. The thrice-repeated question of the Master is not too easy to understand, but it is the searching questioning of a Master who wishes to take a timid follower whose sin has made him distrustful of himself, and to make of that hesitant disciple a strong leader among his fellows. There are two Greek words used, which are translated in our version by the word "love." The one is used by the Master in His first two questions; the other, which means to have "a regard for" a person, is used by Peter in all his answers and by Jesus in His last question. Peter had always asserted his love, had said that though others might deny Him he would not, and Jesus asks him if he still feels as sure of his great love. "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than the others do?"

Peter's love has not abated but he has now become cautious. He will no longer make assertions which he cannot substantiate and so he answers, "Yea Lord, Thou knowest my regard for Thee." There is a little delay and a more searching question is asked, one which makes no comparison with others but which seeks to bring Peter to an examination of his own heart. "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" The same answer is given. "Yea Lord, Thou knowest my regard for Thee." Jesus probes further, uses Peter's own word, asks a question which naturally causes the disciple grief but is meant in love. "Simon son of Jonas, do you really have any regard for Me?" To which Peter answers, "Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest my regard for Thee." Meantime, with words full of meaning, Jesus has been placing upon him the responsibility of leadership. "Feed my sheep." It seems to be not merely a call to discipleship, but a call to use to the full his powers as one of the disciple band, to accept that position which by his shameful denial he had forfeited.

So out of a man ashamed of himself and of his weakness, Christ built a leader and out of broken disappointed men He is doing the same daily. There is one condition. There is a great difference between grief and depression. From the sixth century on the Christian Church found itself faced with a sin which it called *Accidie*. This was the

spirit of torpor which gave up all hope of itself, which remained unwilling to move, often because it felt that no effort was worth while. There are men and women to-day who are guilty of this sin. The disappointments of their religious life have made them lose hope. God has become a graven image to whom words are perhaps nightly repeated without meaning or to whom no prayers are uttered at all. Grief is the lot of every human being, grief for opportunities missed, but the true sorrow leads men to repentance and directs their thoughts to the God Who is ever willing to forgive. Depression is something different, and with the exception of some cases where it may have physical grounds, it is to be regarded as a sinful condition out of which men should strive to be delivered.

Peter was stricken with sorrow, but in his sorrow he was always ready to turn to the Lord Who could forgive; and no matter what the past may have been, if we can with earnest heart face the Master's searching questions and say, "Thou knowest that I love Thee," then there is within us the foundation rock on which the Great Master-builder can erect an edifice of Christian character which cannot be shaken.

CHAPTER IX

IMMORTALITY

TRAVELLERS narrate wonderful tales of the achievements of Indian conjurers. All have heard of men who are alleged to be able to make a rope appear from nowhere, to cause it to stand erect to its full length and then to climb up the rope thus mysteriously formed. In the opinion of a considerable number of people who have departed from all belief in a future life, the average Christian so far as the hope of immortality is concerned, is like the Indian juggler. During his busy life he finds time to create a fabric of belief in a future life, fashioned from nothing, and in the hour of death he expects to be able to climb the rope of faith thus created. The passing of the generations does nothing to dispel the illusion because no one comes back from that undiscovered bourne to tell what, as the sceptics believe, is the cold truth about this fond delusion.

The number of those who boldly assert their denial of any future life is few, but occasionally one finds men more bold than their fellows who are prepared to assert definitely that all hope of a future

life is illusory. In Mr. Wyndham Lewis's book, "The Art of being Ruled," this attitude is adopted. "Christ's doctrine," he says, "was a drug. Beneath its influence men saw their wrongs being righted, saw 'the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely' punished and humble faith rewarded, the last first and the first last. Is it," he continues, speaking of the teaching of Jesus, "the action of an honourable man to give people these flattering visions?" For one man thus outspoken, there are twenty whose minds are filled with questionings. They would like to believe that even as the sun sets on our hemisphere, transferring the rule to her sister the moon, but goes to shine in all its glory elsewhere, so our souls are freed from the body but pass on to a still more glorious dawning. While their hearts hope for this, many questionings arise. How can they be sure of a morning without clouds? May not humanity's belief in immortality be simply an illusion which makes life more bearable but which is never known to be an illusion since mankind never awakes from death's sleep to put his beliefs to the test? There were men in the early Church who felt like this. Perhaps they did not boldly assert that dead men do not rise, but they doubted the apostle's teaching and in 1 Corinthians, chapter xv, Paul strives to demonstrate the certainty of the faith in the individual's resurrection to eternal life.

Paul had one advantage over the modern preacher.

Few of those whom he addressed doubted the truth of the Resurrection of Jesus, for it was impossible for them to do so. If questions ever arose in their minds, they had only to declare their doubts to find them vanquished. They need only go to former unbelievers like James the brother of the Lord to find him tell the story of the appearance of the Lord which turned his hostility into loyalty ; or to cautious disciples like Thomas, who except he had seen would not have believed ; or they could find at hand many of the five hundred brethren of whom Paul writes, " the greater part remain unto this present but some are fallen asleep." The early Church was living on the impulse communicated to it by the appearance of the Risen Lord. The preachers proclaimed no conquered leader, lying in a Syrian tomb, but a living Lord Who had kept His appointed tryst with His favoured followers and Who had made His power manifest in their midst. The Jewish world is to-day keenly interested in a book published by the foremost orthodox Jewish scholar of our time. Although other writers, such as the historian, S. Setzer, and Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky, caused much comment by their books urging the Jewish people to reconsider their attitude to Jesus, Dr. Klausner's book, " Jesus of Nazareth," in which the author represents Jesus as the embodiment of ethical and religious idealism, has caused a sensation. There is much which

causes sorrow to a Christian in this brilliant book, but the treatment of the Resurrection is significant. While he believes that Joseph of Arimathea, after having laid the body of Jesus in his new tomb, secretly removed it at the close of the Sabbath and placed it in an unknown grave, he denies that there was any deception on the part of the early Church. "The nineteen hundred years' faith of millions is not founded on deception. There can be no question but that some of the ardent Galileans saw their Lord and Messiah in a vision." As Christians we are convinced that there was reality behind the visions. When our Lord appeared, all who were near at hand did not see Him. The eyes of many remained still unopened. "He led them out as far as Bethany," we read. We are not to imagine that as these men walked along the roads surrounding Jerusalem on this great day, their eyes turned intently towards a figure going on ahead, their spirits subdued at the presence of their Lord, other travellers would see the eleven with Jesus walking in front of them. Their eyes would be holden so that they could not see the living Lord towards whom the eyes of the disciples were turned with such eager love on that momentous walk. Yet the disciples knew of a certainty that their Lord was with them. Are not most of us prepared to share this conviction? The Saviour lives and is known to His own. "If Christ be preached that

He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead." You do not doubt that Jesus overcame death, why do you doubt that others than He may share the victory over the last enemy of all ?

" When from the dead he rais'd His Son
And called Him to the sky,
He gave our souls a lively hope
That they should never die."

In addition to this argument which we may call the argument from history, Paul used another argument which may be regarded as the argument of the emotions. As the years pass, Heaven becomes a more powerful conception in the thought of all good people. The vacant chairs on earth remind us of appointed places in the Father's Home.

" I never stand beside a bier and see
The seal of death set on some well-loved face,
But that I say one more to welcome me
When I have crossed the intervening space
Between this land and that land over there,
One more to make the strange Beyond seem fair."

While many may be doubtful whether they as individuals have enriched their personality so that it contains anything which deserves to be imperishable, we have all known good men and women whose lives manifested the glory of the celestial to such a degree that we cannot conceive it possible

that they should have died. We are so conscious of failure in our own lives that we would not charge God with harshness if He did not consider our lives worth conserving but allowed them to be extinguished as a match by the night winds, but we have known lives of such saintliness that we are sure that God has other work for them to do. The Church at Corinth had its roll of saints with regard to whom the thought of extinction was impossible. Unbelieving husbands, heedless sons, could remember wives, mothers, sisters, brothers, who had witnessed a good confession and many turned to Christianity because they believed it held out to them a hope of being reunited with the beloved one who had gone. Confining ourselves to one of the many possible meanings of Paul's words, we find this idea behind the question, "What shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?" Many careless Corinthians who had refused to listen to the pleadings of devoted Christian relatives when they had been with them, found themselves longing for the handclasp of a departed friend and for "the sound of a voice that was dear," and the promise of reunion which the Christian faith offered, had proved the determining influence in winning them for allegiance to Christ and for witnessing to that faith in baptism.

The third argument is that based on the lives of the men who formed the early Church. If they had

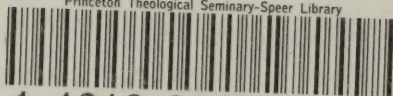
desired, they might have been as others, interested only in worldly aims. "Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die." Instead, it was apparent that they were living their lives on a higher level, striving to realize noble ideals which time did not create and which time could not destroy. They were sacrificing many of these things which the world valued most highly and this exalted life of the Christian community could only be explained by the faith that this world's gifts were not to be compared with the eternal inheritance to which the Christians believed themselves heirs. Sustained by a great hope, their lives were of such a nature that no other explanation could be found than that they were based on the confident faith in a resurrection.

So much of the weakness of our religious life to-day arises from the fact that we do not truly believe and put to the test these great words and many others like them. Divested of the garments of our frail mortality, the soul goes on to a life more wonderful by far. To the Christian, death is an episode in life, an adventure at one stage of the long journey which brings us to God. The great gift of God is not immortality, but something better, a possession infinitely greater, eternal life, which is already possible in this world through such a union with God in Christ that the death of the body cannot interfere with it in any way whatever.

In comparison with the consolation of such a message, the generally accepted belief in a resurrection on a far-off last day, the belief which a great section of the Jewish community shared and which the Jewish Church proclaimed, has little within it to attract and little to comfort. It was no comfort to think that the departed go on sleeping for endless ages and then hear the awakening blasts of some last trump calling them to judgment. Would such a thought comfort any of us? After death, a long, long sleep, while decades pass, while generations come and go, and then at the end a call to life. Many would say, if we are to go out into the unconscious sleep of death, then better let us remain asleep for ever. What comfort would there be if we thought that the true and the brave are now asleep within the tomb, spending the days and hours in unconsciousness and inactivity, even if we believed that one day they would be called from their sleep? Jesus uttered words which make us know that the departed are living a life more glorious than any we know, following the great Captain of our Salvation in another state of being more glorious than any we can imagine. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Our sorrow must therefore be accompanied by its note of triumph. It is not for us to allow our imagination to carry us beyond the simple yet unfathomable words of the Master.

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